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FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0292

S E C R E T ASMARA 000157

FOR A/S CARSON AND AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE: GSE ACKNOWLEDGES HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN
SOMALIA, SEES ETHIOPIAN THREAT

REF: A. GAYTON HAMIEL E-MAIL 05/14/09
[1](#)B. KNIGHT/TABLER-STONE TELCON 05/14/09
[1](#)C. CARSON/TABLER-STONE TELCON 05/14/09

Classified By: CDA Melinda Tabler-Stone for reason 1.4(d)

[1](#)1. (S) Charge delivered the demarche as instructed per referenced conversations to Director General All Desks Fessahazion Petros at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (roughly the "P" equivalent). After delivering the first two objectives, the Charge then noted that in various exchanges in recent months both governments had expressed a desire to improve relations. She said Eritrea should take note of recent U.S. efforts to reengage with unfriendly governments, that President Obama is visionary in this regard and that now is Eritrea's best opportunity for better relations. However, if the GSE did not take the two specified actions, there would be no "fresh start" to relations.

[1](#)2. (S) Fessahazion said the Eritrean position on Somalia was well known and the GSE took a different view of the way forward on Somalia. He said the Somali people should be given the opportunity to decide for themselves. He characterized the international support for the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia as a "pity" and said Ethiopian troops remain on the border and will "strike every time they deem it necessary." He acknowledged the humanitarian crisis and was well versed in the numbers. The Charge pressed that a ceasefire was necessary to both end the suffering and to enable a political process to take place. Fessahazion said Eritrea has "no authority over what is going on in Somalia." The Charge replied that countries do call for cease-fires whenever faced with conflicts in their regions, that this is a normal diplomatic move, and that it is helpful. Fessahazion said he would ensure the message would be delivered to the "highest levels" and that he would inform the Charge of the government's reply.

[1](#)3. (S) Comment: Fessahazion was quick to bring Ethiopia into the equation as their existential conflict with Ethiopia colors every aspect of Eritrean foreign policy and is the basis of their support for insurgent elements. The most positive aspects of the exchange were that Fessahazion expressed gratitude for this diplomatic exchange, which was consistent with the GSE's desire to normalize discourse. Also, that we found common ground on the desire to end human suffering in Somalia, and finally, that he promised a reply to the demarche (as most Embassy requests to the GSE are met with silence). Post will advise the Department immediately of any reply.

TABLER-STONE